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Students identified as "hard-core" future dropouts by counselors, teachers, and school administrators should be grouped together for a comprehensive, short-term course. Some of the realistic objectives of a terminal program for potential dropouts are: to prepare students who are dropping out of school for immediate employment, to familiarize students with various means and agencies that can help them obtain full-time and part-time work, to prepare students for job interviews, to expose students to procedures needed for obtaining employment credentials, to make students aware of state labor laws and equivalency tests, and to leave students with knowledge of possible procedures for re-entry into the school program.

The following is a list of units recommended for inclusion in a terminal program: how to find a job, how to apply for a job, the job interview, how to obtain working papers, employee-employer relations, employee responsibilities, retirement plans, banking and saving, how to complete income tax forms, union and non-union membership, apprenticeship training programs, and the armed forces.

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# A SHORT-TERM

# TERMINAL COURSE

# FOR

# POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

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# A SHORT-TERM TERMINAL COURSE FOR POTENTIAL DROPOUTS*

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Education for all children has long been the prime goal of our American democracy. Education is a basic requisite for mature citizenship, for maintenance of our way of life, and for successful entry into today's complicated working world. Although this is our goal, an alarming number of intellectually, capable children withdraw from school before completing their secondary studies. Whatever the reasons for terminating their formal learning, the school needs one last chance to prepare them for the adult responsibilities that will be expected of them after their transition to the working world. What happens in this last effort could be a decisive factor in the reluctant learner's future effectiveness as a citizen.

## THE POTENTIAL SCHOOL DROPOUT

All youngsters are not content with school. Some stick with it; others don't. Roughly, four out of ten drop out yearly. There are various symptoms of maladjustment to school demonstrated by the unhappy pupil. Among these are truancy, under-achievement, retardation in reading and arithmetic, laziness, poor works habits, negative attitudes toward school and education, rudeness and defiance. There are many others. Of course, the presence of one of these cues in a student does not necessarily mean he will leave school. But a combination of them in a single student is a good indication of a less-than-twelve years school expectancy.

Many students stop trying academically as early as the second or third grade. Students who are just marking time until their 16th birthday are usually readily identifiable. They show their discontent with school by becoming involved in many classroom disturbances, including fights with their teachers. Such individuals might justifiably be called "hard-core" dropouts - hard-core because their behavior pattern in school is one of defiance and disobedience and at this point it is practically impossible to change it. School to them is a place to keep warm in the winter, sleep and socialize during the other seasons. They haven't the faintest notion, and care less, about the duties that will be expected of them as soon as they become of legal age to drop out of school or be expelled. For some of them the transition will be an emotional shock. Some will adjust; some won't.

* This article reflects the experimentation that is taking place in the Madison Area Project, Syracuse, New York.

The school has a great challenge facing it with this type of 'hard-core' youngster in its midst. Somehow, and in a short period of time, it must prepare him for the new role he will be expected to assume as soon as he leaves his books. Steps must be taken, as limited as they may be, to acquaint him with many of the common facts and methods he will need as soon as he gets out of school so that the difficulties facing him will be somewhat reduced. A specific amount of knowledge must be presented to him to help him become familiar with ideas concerning seeking and maintaining satisfactory employment, as well as attitudes necessary for successful employee-employee, employer-employee relationships. Guiding him to avenues of available employment and other community opportunities cannot be overlooked. A comprehensive course outlining the role he will find for himself when he crosses the line to academic freedom is a must if we are to offer him some positive assistance. Let us view this course of action as a short-term, terminal program for potential dropouts.

## SUGGESTED PROCEDURE FOR INITIATION OF A TERMINAL PROGRAM

The students who have been identified as "hard-core" future dropouts by the counselors, teachers, and school administrators should be grouped together for this course. It is suggested they meet for one period a day for approximately ten-to-twenty days. Arrangements could be made so that the time schedule of the program fits within the total school schedule. Suitable materials for use in the daily meetings can be obtained from community agencies. These materials will add meaning to the course. Application blanks, bank deposit and withdrawal slips, checks, income tax forms, nutrition information, etc., are some examples. At the completion of the course, students should be directed to the State Employment Agency for employment. In addition, the services of the local County Youth Board, plus other community youth groups, should be utilized in securing work for these youngsters. The State Employment Service can help them discover vocational aptitudes and interests through their testing program. The course could be given twice a year or more often, depending upon the needs of the school sponsoring it. It might be administered at the times during the school year when the dropout rate is highest. Before Christmas and Easter seem to be two such dates. Attendance at this terminal course could be made compulsory for those who have made the decision to leave school.

Through these lessons the students should be assured that the school stands ready to help them if they ever desire to return for any reason - even for a friendly talk. These lessons should help them sense that the school does not look negatively at them or dislike them for deciding to withdraw. They should be assured that it is their staunch ally, ready to assist them in any way it can. The selection of the person who is going to direct these classes is vitally important. The wrong

individual in front of this group will spell disaster. His presentation must be warm, friendly, outgoing, sympathetic, and understanding. A cold, maladjusted person will reinforce the idea that school is the place to get away from - now and forever.

## OBJECTIVES OF A TERMINAL PROGRAM

Listed below area some reasonable, realistic objectives of a terminal program.

- To prepare students who are dropping out of school for immediate employment.
- To familiarize students with various means and agencies that can help them obtain full-time and part-time work.
- To prepare students for job interviews.
- To acquaint students with procedures for completing employment application forms.
- To give the departing learners essential knowledge about various labor laws of the state and their application to them.
- To expose students to the procedures needed for obtaining credentials for employment, e.g. social security cards, working papers, contracts, etc.
- To leave students with the knowledge of possible procedure for re-entry into the school program, either day-school or night-school.
- To make students aware of equivalency tests.
- To expose students to attitudes successful employees need to develop in the world-of-work.
- To develop an awareness of some of the immediate problems of daily living and management that will be theirs as they prepare to enter into the work-world.
- To encourage students to maintain contact with the school for purposes of follow-up, problem discussion, etc.
- To impress on student leavers the continuing interest of the school in their progress, further education, etc.

POSSIBLE CURRICULUM OUTLINE
FOR A TERMINAL PROGRAM

The following is an outline of areas that merit consideration when planning or preparing a terminal program. The teacher or counselor introducing them should give them at the student's level of learning. Getting the material across to the student is one of the most important functions of the program. Lecturing is to be prohibited.

## Areas of Instruction

How to Find a Job

How to Apply for a Job

The Job Interview

Agencies within the Community for Job Placement

Business and Industrial Training Programs within the Community

How to Obtain Working Papers and Credentials for Employment

Labor Laws Pertinent to Work; Minimum Wages in the State

Employer-Employee Relations, Employee-Employer Relations

Employee Responsibilities

Retirement Plans; Hospitalization and Sick Benefits

Banking and Saving

Family Budgets and Responsibility

Concerns of Family Responsibility

How to Complete Income Tax Forms of the State and Federal Government

Union and Non-Union Membership

Technical Training School and Night School Opportunities

Apprenticeship Training Programs

How to Obtain Assistance on Legal Matters, Marital and Family Problems

The Armed Forces

## SUMMARY

Youngsters who are ready to throw away their books but who must wait until they are of legal age to do so are one of the biggest problems facing educators today. The label "dropout" has been applied to all such students. Under it are many types of students who find no satisfaction with school work. Some show unmistakeable signs of discontent with learning and are responsible for many disturbances in class; others create no problems, remain silent and docile, but leave when they become legally able to do so. This paper is meant for resentful potential school leavers usually identifiable by their symptoms of belligerence, defiance, rudeness, truancy, and disrespect for authority. Through these acts they repeatedly demonstrate they are finished with formal learning. They are quite often the scourge of the classroom teacher and make it well known they are marking time until they become legally free from their instructors and principals. Realistically, little, educationally, can be done for these reluctant learners at this point. Nonetheless, letting these youngsters go free without some type of preparation for the challenges that await them is detrimental both to themselves and society. It is for this reason a short-term, terminal course has been presented.